

San Antonio Missions

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park



Mission San Francisco de la Espada

English

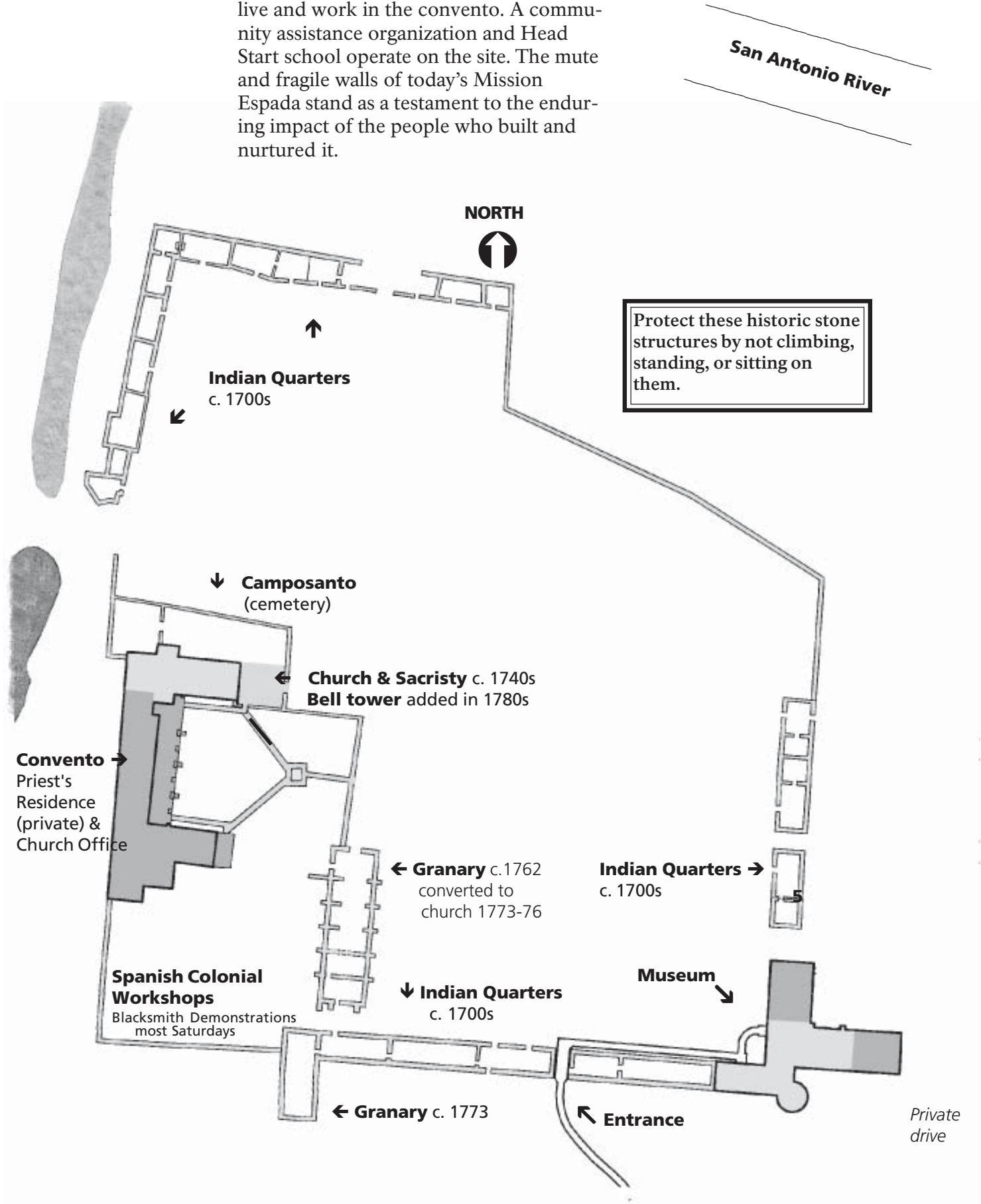


After 250 years, Mission San Francisco de la Espada (Mission Saint Francis of the Sword) remarkably retains its unique features and solitary character – keepsakes from the mid-1700s. Espada’s ongoing legacy lies in the blending of Spanish and American Indian lifeways on this sacred ground, creating a new people and culture. Though Spain lost its claim on the New World, its legendary presence remains. As you explore the site, look for the distinctive Spanish features of the church doorway, *espadaña* (belltower), brick archways, and flowing *acequias* (irrigation ditches).

First Mission in Texas	Espada’s roots lie in east Texas, where Spain founded Mission San Francisco de los Texas in 1690. Along with several others, it served as a buffer against French encroachment from Louisiana. Fevers,	floods, fires, enemies, and limited supplies prompted several relocations of this early mission. On March 5, 1731, Mission San Francisco de la Espada was established along this bank of the San Antonio River.
Missions: Tools of Change	<p>Imagine two diverse cultures – separated by language, values and faith – colliding and merging to create a unique mix.</p> <p>Spanish Franciscan missionaries pursued a powerful vision for God and country. They aligned and trained the Coahuiltecan (kwa-weel-teken) hunting and gathering cultures to be servants of God and loyal, productive citizens of New Spain. Over a 50-year period, they earnestly taught the principles of farming, ranching, architecture, blacksmithing, loom weaving, spinning, and masonry. Espada was the only San Antonio mission where bricks and tiles were made. The Catholic faith and Spanish language became the foundation of the new culture.</p>	<p>Many Coahuiltecan, staggered by strange intruders, famine, imported diseases, and enemy tribes, opted for the protection and steady food supply of Mission Espada. Here they mastered Spanish arts and trades – and embraced Christianity.</p> <p>By the mid-1700’s, these mission walls echoed with the essence of a dynamic community: the blacksmith’s ringing anvil, bellowing livestock, three pounding looms, the clatter of carpentry, and the scrape of the brick maker. Imagine peach orchards and vast fields of beans, corn, and melons beyond the walls, and within, the hum of chants, prayers, and instructional conversations. Daily training and tasks were accomplished to the timing of the mission bells "<i>which clang out three times a day...startling in the still country air.</i>"</p>

Remains to be Seen

Today the church serves as the heart of this small community; mission descendants continue to worship here. Franciscans, clothed in their simple brown habits, live and work in the convento. A community assistance organization and Head Start school operate on the site. The mute and fragile walls of today's Mission Espada stand as a testament to the enduring impact of the people who built and nurtured it.



Labores (croplands)

Rancho de las Cabras, ↓
23 miles to Floresville, Texas